



# Your Wildfire Action Plan



## *"Should I stay or should I go?"*

### Santa Barbara County Wildfire Action Plan

#### Evacuate Early? or Stay and Defend.

If you live in the Wildland/Urban Interface area, then you are in danger of experiencing a wildfire. During wildfires, evacuations are put in place to protect lives. **Your property can be replaced, but your life cannot. Therefore, we recommend that you evacuate when told to do so by authorities.**

Brushfire fatalities most commonly occur when people leave their home too late or are overtaken by fire. If you live in an area that's at high risk for brushfire, it's important for you to decide now whether you're going to evacuate early or stay and defend your home.

Sheltering in place, or staying to defend your home, requires considerable planning. Fire agencies cannot make that decision for you. It's up to you to determine whether you are capable of staying and defending your home.

So, grab a pen or pencil, and use this guide to develop your Wildfire Action Plan.



#### **If you live in an area prone to brushfire,**

- Your property should be well-prepared before a wildfire arrives.
- Appropriately prepared and constructed buildings offer protection during brushfires, reducing the likelihood of injury or death.
- Firefighting resources cannot always protect every property. Those planning to stay and defend their home must be prepared to be self-sufficient.
- A decision to stay and defend a well-prepared property or to evacuate early must be made well ahead of the arrival of a wildfire.
- In planning to leave early, you must know where you are going, how you will get there and what "trigger point" you will use to initiate your plan.
- Those who doubt their ability to cope with a wildfire should leave well before fire impacts their area.
- Evacuation at the last minute, ahead of a brushfire, is very dangerous.
- Large-scale, mass evacuations of communities require significant lead times. The safest course of action is to have a well-rehearsed plan in place to evacuate early or stay and defend long before the onset of a wildfire.

#### **POP Quiz:**

- Are you physically fit to fight spot fires in and around your home for up to 10 hours or more?
- Are you and your family members mentally, physically and emotionally able to cope with the intense smoke, heat, stress and noise of a brushfire while defending your home?
- Can you protect your home while also caring for members of your family, pets, etc.?
- Do you have the necessary resources and equipment to effectively fight a fire?
- Does your home have defensible space of at least 100 feet and is it cleared of flammable materials and vegetation?
- Is your home constructed to resist fire?

If you answered "No" to *any* of these questions, then plan to *evacuate early*.



## Create Your Wildfire Action Plan

Your Wildfire Action Plan must be prepared with all members of your household well in advance of a fire.

These checklists will help you prepare your plan to either Evacuate Early or Stay and Defend.

Each family's Wildfire Action Plan will be different, depending on their situation.

Once you finish your plan, rehearse it regularly with your family and keep it in a safe and accessible place for quick implementation.



## Prepare Your Family

### Whether you decide to evacuate early or stay and defend,

- Create a Family Disaster Plan that includes meeting locations and communication plans and rehearse it regularly. Include in your plan the evacuation of large animals such as horses.
- Have fire extinguishers on hand and train your family how to use them.
- Ensure that your family knows where your gas, electric and water main shut-off controls are and ensure how to use them.
- Plan several different escape routes.
- Designate an emergency meeting location outside the fire hazard area.
- Assemble an emergency supply kit as recommended by the American Red Cross.
- Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so you can communicate with family members if you get separated.
- Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers posted near your phone and in your emergency supply kit.
- Keep an extra emergency supply kit in your car, in case you have to evacuate quickly or can't get to your home because of fire.
- Have a portable radio or scanner so you can stay updated on the fire.

# Evacuate Early

*By evacuating early, you give your family the best chance of surviving a wildfire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job.*

## **INSIDE**

- Close doors, windows, vents, blinds or non-combustible window coverings and heavy drapes. Remove lightweight curtains.
- Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.
- Open fireplace damper and close fireplace screens.
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the home, away from windows and doors.
- Turn on lights.
- Shut off the air conditioning.

## **OUTSIDE**

- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Place combustible patio furniture inside.
- Connect garden hoses to outside taps.
- Wet or remove vegetation around the home.
- Don't leave sprinklers on or water running – they can waste critical water pressure.
- Leave exterior lights on.
- Have a ladder available.

## **WHEN TO LEAVE**

- Relocate early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke or road congestion. Don't wait to be told by authorities to leave. In an intense wildfire, they may not have time to knock on every door. If you are advised to evacuate, don't hesitate!

## **WHERE TO GO**

- Evacuate to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.)

## **HOW TO GET THERE**

- Have several travel routes in case one route is blocked by the fire or by emergency vehicles and equipment. Choose an escape route away from the fire.

## **WHAT TO TAKE**

- Take your emergency supply kit containing your family and pet's necessary items, such as water, clothing, food, first aid kits, medications and toys. Also, don't forget valuables, such as your computer CPU, photos and important documents.
- Organize your family members and make arrangements for your pets.

# Stay and Defend

**\*\*\*We strongly recommend that you evacuate when told to do so by authorities. If you find that it is too late to leave, or if you choose to stay, this checklist will help you to be prepared.\*\*\***

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## As the fire approaches

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### FAMILY CHECKLIST

- Alert family and neighbors.
- Dress in appropriate clothing (i.e., clothing made from natural fibers, such as cotton and work boots). Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy to protect your eyes and lungs.
- Ensure that you have your brushfire survival kit on hand that includes necessary items, such as long-sleeved cotton or wool clothing for all family members, a battery powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and ample drinking water.
- Stay tuned to your scanner or local radio stations for updates.
- Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water and keep an eye on your family and pets.

### OUTSIDE CHECKLIST

- Gather up flammable items from the exterior of the house and bring them inside (e.g., patio furniture, children's toys, door mats, plastic garbage cans / recycle bins, etc.).
- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Back your car into the garage. Shut doors and roll up windows. Leave the key in the ignition in case you have to make a quick escape.
- Wet vegetation near the house with a hose or sprinkler.
- Wet down any predetermined problem areas.
- Patrol your property and extinguish spot fires.

### INSIDE CHECKLIST

- Shut all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.
- Remove flammable window shades and curtains and close metal shutters.
- Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- Open the fireplace damper and close the fireplace screens.
- Fill bath, sinks and buckets with water.
- Place wet towels in gaps under doors.
- Leave your lights on.
- Shut off the air conditioning.

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## As the fire front arrives

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- Bring hoses, buckets and other firefighting tools inside with you.
- Keep your family and pets together in a safe location inside your home.
- Shelter away from outside walls.
- Patrol inside your home for spot fires and extinguish them.
- Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire. (Remember that if it's hot inside the house, it's at least four to five times hotter outside.)
- Stay hydrated.

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## After the fire has passed

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- Check the roof and extinguish any fires, sparks and embers.
- Check inside the attic for hidden embers.
- Patrol your property and extinguish fires.
- Ensure safety of family members and pets.
- Continue to drink plenty of water.



## Now, It's Your Turn!

Write up your Wildfire Action Plan and post it in a location where every member of your family can see it. Rehearse it with your family.

### Wildfire Action Plan – Evacuate Early

During Red Flag Alert days in your area, monitor your local media for information on brushfires and be ready to implement your plan.

Important Phone Numbers:

Emergency:

School:

Family:

Friends:

When to go:

Where to go:

How to get there:

What to take:

Who to tell (before and after):

## **Wildfire Action Plan – Stay and Defend**

During Red Flag Alert days in your area, monitor your local media for information on brushfires and be ready to implement your plan.

**Important Phone Numbers:**

**Emergency:**

**School:**

**Family:**

**Friends:**

**As the fire approaches:**

**As the fire front arrives:**

**After the fire has passed:**



### **SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT CONTACTS**

**If you have an emergency, call 911.**

**Main Number: 805-681-5500**

**Fire Prevention/Inspection Line: 805-686-8170**

**For more info visit our website: [www.sbcfire.com](http://www.sbcfire.com)**

**For a home wildfire safety inspection, contact your local County Fire Station.**

Credits: This Wildfire Action Plan Checklist was prepared by the Santa Barbara County Fire Department, borrowing from a wealth of existing resources. Special thanks to Ventura County Fire Department, the South Australian Country Fire Service, FireSafe Council, Firewise Communities, Dr. Ed Smith and the University of Nevada, Reno Cooperative Extension for their contributions to the content. This fact sheet is available on the Santa Barbara County Fire Department's website at <http://sbcfire.com>.